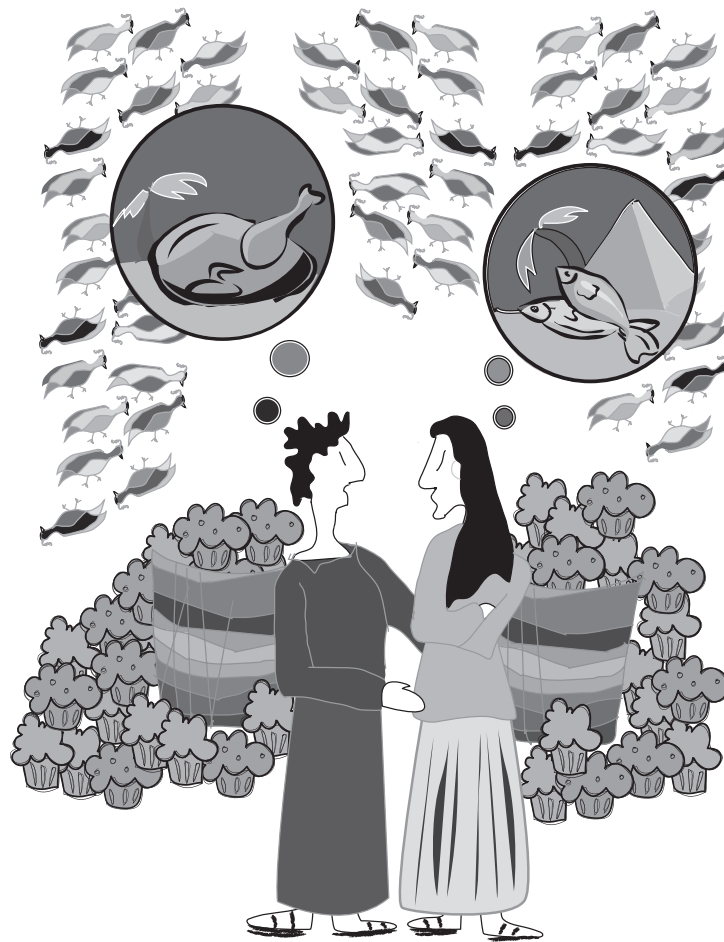


LESSON 38

The People of Israel Complain

NUMBERS 11



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD'S MERCY SPARES ISRAEL AGAIN, DESPITE THEIR REJECTION OF GOD

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** **5 MIN**
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** **10 MIN**
Read Numbers 11 from the Scriptures or read story 38, “The People of Israel Complain,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** **10 MIN**
It’s Easy to Grumble
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ paper napkins
 - ✓ a large bag of popcorn
 - ✓ bag of candy-coated chocolate
 - ✓ a coin
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** **10 MIN**
Loathsome to You
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ a jar of peanut butter
 - ✓ a jar of jelly
 - ✓ paper plates
 - ✓ knife
 - ✓ loaf of bread
6. **WORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** **10 MIN**
Coloring Activity
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ coloring page 38—one copy for each child
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**
We Love to Complain
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ twenty letter Cs cut out of or copied onto red paper
 - ✓ tape

TOTAL 75 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

God has been faithful, yet Israel complains—It has been more than two years since Israel left Egypt. During these years, God has been perfectly faithful. He has given manna to eat and created springs of water in the desert. He has been with them in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire.

The people had been camping at the foot of Mount Sinai for some time. But now they take a three-day journey to the edge of the Promised Land. Once again, the Israelites begin to complain. Even though they have seen God’s faithfulness and they have seen God’s anger when they are disobedient, they still complain. We are not told why the Lord burns the outlying parts of the camp. Maybe this is where the complainers are.

The rabble tempts the rest—At first, it looks as though only *some* people were dissatisfied with eating manna. These are called “the rabble.” But as they complained, the rest of the Israelites became dissatisfied as well. They did not remember how it was being slaves in Egypt; they only remembered that they ate different food that they liked better.

They began to long for that food instead of manna. God had given them manna to eat every day, but now they despised it, and they complained and grumbled against God. One day, Jesus, the Bread of Life sent from heaven, would also be rejected by people who wanted their own way more than they wanted God’s way.

God provides both blessing and judgment—Moses himself begins to complain to God and blame God for the rebellion of the people. Moses is so tired of all the challenges of leading the Israelites that he asks God to kill him. So God has compassion on Moses and gives him 70 elders to help him.

God could have destroyed all Israel for their sin. But like a loving father he teaches the Israelites a lesson for complaining against him. A plague comes over the people, but it kills only those “who had the craving.” This probably refers to the rabble who started the complaining. The rebellion of the people and even the complaining of Moses could not change God’s plan to raise up a redeemer from among the descendants of Abraham.

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Colossians 1:10–14.

Paul encourages us in these verses to have endurance, patience, and joy as we serve God. He wants us to give thanks to God, who has given us redemption and forgiveness through Jesus.

Just like the Israelites, we are tempted to grumble and complain against God when we do not like his plan for us. Just like the Israelites, we deserve death, but instead, we can receive rescue through Jesus.

Whenever the Israelites sinned and God had mercy on them, he gave them mercy because he knew that a Savior was coming. Any time God has ever had mercy on anyone, it was because of Jesus.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Numbers 11 from the Scriptures or read story 38, "The People of Israel Complain," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

It's Easy to Grumble

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper napkins
- ✓ a large bag of popcorn
- ✓ bag of candy-coated chocolate
- ✓ a coin

The object of the illustration is to show the children just how easy it is to grumble and how our sinful hearts and our sinful desires can lead us to complain.

Hide the candy and place the popcorn on a table for all to see. Explain to the class that you are going to toss a coin to see who will get the popcorn, children with birthdays in January through June or children with birthdays in July through December. Have a child from each group call heads or tails. Give the popcorn to whichever group wins. Tell them that they can eat it as soon as they get it. Give a handful on a napkin to each one in the winning group.

Move ahead slowly and listen to any complaints by those who didn't get any popcorn. Do not explain why some received the popcorn and some did not. After a few minutes take out the candy-coated chocolate and distribute it to all those who did not receive the popcorn, again without explanation. Listen again for complaints.

Go on by reading Numbers 11:1–6. Then ask the class the following questions:

- **Did you want to complain when you didn't get what the other children got?**
(Draw the children out regarding how they felt.)
- **How did you feel when you received popcorn first? How did that change after the other children received candy?**
(Help the children identify with how quickly we can go from delighting in what we have to despising what we have. Help them compare themselves with Israel, who would at one time have been very grateful for the manna but who now despised it.)
- **What does our complaining say about our gratitude to God for what he gives us?**
(Our complaining reveals that our desire is not first and foremost for God but rather for what we want. If we truly would find our satisfaction in him alone and what he provides for us, we would be content.)

Just as the people of Israel rejected God's provision of manna, so people today reject God's provision of Jesus, who is the bread of life. They would rather pursue their own desires and appetites. Just as the people of Israel were tempted to go back to Egypt, so people today are tempted to fall back into sinful rebellion.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Loathsome to You

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a jar of peanut butter
- ✓ a jar of jelly
- ✓ paper plates
- ✓ knife
- ✓ loaf of bread

The object is to demonstrate how too much of a good thing can become loathsome.

Ask the class if anyone is hungry. After a show of hands, ask those who raised their hands who really likes peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Recruit four volunteers (make sure they are not allergic to peanuts). Make up a sandwich with normal proportions of peanut butter and jelly. Divide one sandwich up into quarters and pass them around. Make a second sandwich with triple the peanut butter and jelly and again pass out quarters. Then make a third with all the remaining peanut butter and jelly, so that it just oozes out. Divide it up into quarters and pass it to the children. You will likely start getting comments of it being gross, from them or the audience. Don't force this on the participants, but let them try to eat some of it if they desire. It will likely smear all over them. Excuse them to clean up.

Then ask the class the following questions about Numbers 11:13–23, 31–34:

- **How did God teach the Israelites a lesson by giving them too much of a good thing (quail three feet deep)?**
(God gave them so much quail that they literally got sick of it. A little of a good thing is good, but too much of a good thing can make you sick.)
- **Have you ever gotten sick by eating too much of something? Did you ever get sick and tired of a food you ate all the time?**
(Accept several answers.)

- What was God trying to teach Israel through this lesson?

(Ultimately God was trying to teach Israel that they should look to him alone for their fulfillment. Though it is fine to desire food, it is wrong to want something more than God and his provision. God wanted Israel to realize that they only needed him.)

- How did Moses express his doubts?

(Moses couldn't believe that God was able to give the hundreds of thousands of people meat to eat. Moses underestimated the power of God.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page 38—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- Can you think of a time when you complained? What did you complain about?

(Accept any answer.)

- What was Israel complaining about?

(manna to eat day after day)

- What do you think the people of Israel should have done instead of complaining?

(They should have been grateful for all that God had provided, and they should have prayed to God for anything they needed.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON **10 MIN**

We Love to Complain

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ twenty letter *C*s cut out of or copied onto red paper
- ✓ tape

Explain to the children that it is easy to complain. Each time you read about complaining or anyone in the class complains you will put a red *C* up in front of the class.

As you read through the Bible story, put up a red *C* each time you read about complaining or talk about it. Also put up a red *C* every time any of the children complain.

This should help the class see just how easy it is to complain. If no one in your class is complaining, you might try giving a privilege to half the class or penalizing half the class and see what the other half has to say about it. Or ask the children to tell you a time when they complained or ask them to tell you a story of someone they knew who complained or grumbled.

LESSON 38 - THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL COMPLAIN

